

Director's Report, Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee Report

July 2021

This report summarises key areas likely to lead to decisions over the next 6 months, including updates on areas previously reported.

1.0 Decisions

1.1 Relevant forthcoming decisions, by date due:

- [Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground - Strategic Planning](#) (22 Sep 2021 by Cabinet)
- [Arle Court Transport Hub –Contract Procurement and Ancillary Orders](#) (21 Jul 2021 by Cabinet)
- [Provision of Food Waste Transfer Services](#) (21 Jul 2021 by Cabinet)
- [A435 Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham Capacity Improvements – Contract Procurement](#) (Between 12 Jan 2021 and 31 Aug 2021 by Cabinet Member - Highways and Flood)
- [Gloucestershire County Council's partnership agreement with Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council in relation to the Joint Core Strategy](#) (Between 3 Aug 2020 and 30 Sep 2021 by Cabinet Member - Environment and Planning)

1.2 Pending Items not yet published on the Forward Plan:

- GSWB Llanthony Road
- GCC Infrastructure Recovery Strategy
- Highways Major Projects Framework
- Bristol to Birmingham Corridor Study report

2.0 Highways

2.1 Highways Contracts

- Term maintenance (Ringway) – Third year of contract underway. Some focus now required on progressing collaborative working relationship. Performance on cyclical maintenance and defect repair remains on target, but there continue to be high numbers of defects being found through inspections or reported by public. Patching and jetpatcher resource have been mobilised to help address repairs.
- Professional services (Atkins) – Third year of contract underway.
- Structural maintenance (Tarmac) – Last year of current contract. Continued good performance and final year of £150m investment commenced. Procurement of next surfacing contract to be considered over next 6 months in readiness for April 2022.
- Street lighting (M Group) – Capital investment period virtually complete and largely maintenance activities being undertaken. Performance on key indicators remains satisfactory.
- Highway Skills Academy – Current focus is on the formation of a development/career path for those staff which are progressing through their apprenticeships in order that GCC retains the investment in time, funds and skills. First Level 4 (HNC equivalent) Apprentice has been appointed and now progressing opportunities for the same Level 4 course for existing members of the team.
- Awards – submissions made for CIHT Active Travel (London Road), CIHT Structures (A38 Canal Bridges) and ICE Structures (A38 Canal Bridges) awards. A38 Canal Bridges shortlisted for the ICE award.

2.2 Highways Delivery

- Depots/property – development of strategic plan for highways depots included in 21/22 Service Plan in order to ensure facilities are fit for purpose.
- Ash die back – continued programme in 21/22 including planting programme to ensure that two trees are planted for each one felled with ash die back disease. Discussions are underway with external organisations such as National Trust and others to identify larger woodland planting schemes off the public highway.

2.3 Major Projects

J10

- Non-statutory public consultation results now published. Preferred Route Announcement took place on 16th June 2021 along with associated communications and publication via GCC website.
- Land agents appointed to progress land acquisition and negotiations in partnership with GCC Property.
- Claims to date total just over £10m including 'historic claim' claw back.

A435 Capacity Improvements

- Preparing to go out to tender on capacity improvements on A435 between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve. Funding/need associated with local housing developments.

A435 Charlton Hill

- Scheme moved to next financial year as piling works are weather sensitive and planned construction window is too tight to mitigate risk. Another scheme in the geotechnical/landslip programme will be brought forward for delivery in 21/22.

A419 Junction Improvements (Stonehouse)

- Works substantially complete.

Ashchurch Bridge over Rail (Delivery for Tewkesbury Borough Council)

- Planning permission for the bridge has been granted. Detailed design continues (Atkins).
- Works continue with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Network Rail to understand the complexities of the legal agreements required for the construction phase.

GSWB / Llanthony Road

- Planning permission granted April 2019;
- Public Inquiry decision announced in early April by the DfT for the CPO process – this is subject to a 6 week Judicial Review Period and a Notice of Intent Period which extends until Autumn 2021.
- Advance preparatory works have commenced and signage is in place for information.
- Planning application in with GCC for change of use (part of City Business Centre to become car park for displaced parking)
- Bat Survey completed in May 2021, which highlighted no licencing requirements
- The Llanthony Priory Access works have been completed in April 2021, signage has been used to promote the completion of this phase
- Arrangements are being made to prepare tender documents for the City Business Centre demolition contract.

West Cheltenham / Cyber £22M

- Work started on site for Phases 1 and 2 in June 2020 and works are currently on programme to be completed by Summer 2021.
- The Phase 3 and 4 Design and Build contract started in January 2021 and is due to be completed in early Spring 2022.
- Highways England's safety critical works at Staverton Bridge and M5 Junction 11 are underway with Arle Court forming part of the M5J11 diversion route, whilst this has resulted in an increase in stakeholder contact there has been no impact on the Phase 1 & 2 works programme, largely due to reduced traffic volumes during covid restrictions.

3.0 Community & Infrastructure

3.1 DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund

- Tranche 2: (B4063 Chelt-Glos cycle route): Following criticism last summer of (historic) plans for this route further design work has been done by the council's consultants, Atkins. The amended plans are more compliant with recent government guidance on designing for cycling (LTN 1/20) and were well received in a public consultation in February and March. To make the route as attractive as possible we have invited a critical friend panel to review the design. This work is underway.
- A £231k revenue bid has been submitted to the DfT's Local Authority Capability Fund for a programme of active travel activities in 2021/22. This will support the development of an ambitious and high-quality local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) compliant with LTN 1/20, work on a pipeline of schemes and engagement with communities including employers and schools.

3.2 ITU Public Transport and School Transport

- As part of its "Bus Back Better" strategy to increase the proportion of trips made on public transport the government has committed to extending the Commercial Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) scheme for bus operators whose incomes have been hit hard by Covid travel restrictions and social distancing rules. Grant funding is conditional upon entering into a formal partnership with the local authority and making commitments to improving local services. Officers have secured £100k of capacity funding from the DfT to support development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan and formal partnerships with bus operators.
- Arle Court Transport Hub – Constructive discussions have been held with CBC Planning and with stakeholders and the project is nearing the design freeze stage. A core level of parking capacity will be required during the construction period to support the continued operation of park and ride and NHS services. Options are currently being explored with the designers and with bus operators and the remaining spaces will be prioritised for bus users.

3.3 Network Management (Road Safety and Parking)

- A new interim Road Safety and Data Manager has joined the team, replacing the former manager who recently retired.

3.4 e-Scooter trial

- Zwings are deploying Brand Ambassadors in Cheltenham and Gloucester to promote e-scooter use, look out for anti-social riding and answer questions from members of the public.
- Rides in Gloucester are up by 11.8% from the week before to 407 – 1.21 rides per scooter and 208 riders. Rides in Cheltenham down slightly by 0.7% from the week before to 1273 – 3.31 rides per scooter and 648 riders. This is the 2nd highest number of rides in a week in Cheltenham, only beaten by the previous week.

3.5 Sustainability

- A National Management Trainee graduate placement has started working in the team, for six months, to focus on development and implementation of measures in the Climate Change Action Plan. These include the Tree Strategy, funding bids and supporting green fleet and EV charger projects. The team will be advertising for a new Climate Change and Air Quality officer post this summer.

4.0 Strategic Infrastructure

4.1 B4063 / A40 Highways England Cycling Scheme – Cheltenham to Gloucester

- The original HE scheme, in order to fulfil funding criteria, needed to be completed by March 2020. This, however, was subsequently extended to construction starting in 2021, as part of the RIS2 process. GCC officers continue to engage with HE's Route Manager to attempt to ensure everything is 'joined up'.
- GCC has decided to take over the detailed design of this project, with the design fully underway with the East part of the route designed and consulted upon in Spring 2021, an independent audit has now been completed by a leading industry expert to ensure we provide the best possible facility we can within the constraints. The audit findings have led to extensive enhancement of the provision, which have been heavily endorsed by Sustrans to the extent that they are due to become a major funding provider for the scheme,
- Works are expected to start in late 2021, delivering the east part of the route first.
- This scheme will have the key advantage of directly linking the project to the emerging £22M West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme (WCTIS) providing a continuous link between Gloucester and Cheltenham rail station once complete and include the recently successfully delivered Emergency Active Travel Scheme on London Road in Gloucester. The GFirst LEP Board, in December 2020, agreed that any future underspend on the £22M WCTIS would be ringfenced to the B4063 cycle scheme. Prior to this, in November 2020, £864k was secured from an EATF Tranche 2 bid from the Department for Transport (DfT), which will part fund a section of the works. We have submitted a DfT Levelling Up fund to deliver the scheme in its entirety.

4.2 M5 Junction 9 and A46 (Ashchurch)

- The Strategic Outline Business Case for the M5 J9 / A46 scheme was submitted to the DfT in January 2020;
- Positive Government announcement in March 2020, stating that the scheme should progress to the next stage;
- This is to progress to the Outline Business Case – the cost of which is likely to be £2M-£3M – part of the funding came from the approved £4M GCC funding for 'business case development' in 2020/21;
- The progression of the scheme was considered and approved by GCC Cabinet on 24th March 2021;
- Discussions re- possible future funding ongoing with both Homes England and Tewkesbury BC due to the links to the emerging 'garden town';
- Ongoing discussions with HE to secure approval of options for Junction 9;
- Detailed HE feedback has been received and is currently being analysed by officers and Atkins.

4.3 Digital connectivity

- Cabinet considered and approved the latest, revised Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-2022 in December 2019;
- This is now being implemented, with a view to securing solutions for 'the final 3%'.

4.4 A417 Missing Link

- Preferred Route Announcement (Route 30) made March 2019;
- Further public consultation took place in Autumn 2019;
- A supportive officer-level response to this consultation (a joint response from CDC, TBC and GCC) was sent on 8th November 2019;
- Positive announcement in March 2020 stating that the scheme has secured funding and should progress to DCO;
- Revised proposals were subject to a further public consultation, which started on 12th October 2020. A detailed GCC officer response was sent, meeting the external deadline of 12th November 2020;
- The DCO planning application has now been submitted in June 2021 and is currently being considered by the Planning Inspectorate.

4.5 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

- The LTP was adopted at Full Council on 17th March 2021.

4.6 Chepstow Transport Improvements

- Consultant's report outlined scheme options;
- Monmouthshire CC keen to progress to Full Business Cases;
- GCC Lead Cabinet Members supported a GCC financial contribution of £20K (2020/21) towards Stage 2 of the Chepstow Transport Study;
- A possible further GCC financial contribution for 2021/22 is currently being considered.

4.7 Cinderford

- FoDDC yet to secure planning permission and funding for proposed extension of phase one of the road;
- A Section 73 amendment to vary the existing planning permission has been submitted in April 2021 and is awaiting determination by FoDDC;
- Until planning and funding is in place, no further action for GCC.

4.8 Local Plans / JCS / CIL

- Review of JCS now underway following an 'Issues and Options' consultation which ended in January 2019;
- The JCS Reg.18 consultation is anticipated in Summer/Autumn 2021;
- Progress has been made with the JCS authorities to review the JCS CIL;
- GCC education and library contributions continue to be challenged and declined by some District Councils and developers;
- GCC continues to not receive a penny of CIL from any of the JCS authorities;
- Stroud Local Plan – Consultation on Draft Local Plan – closed 22nd January 2020. Significant officer-level concerns submitted to SDC – especially transport issues re- the significant proposed development at Sharpness. Another SDC consultation took place with additional possible housing sites, which was responded to in December 2020. The next public consultation stage (pre-submission draft consultation) is currently underway, with the closing date for comments 21st July 2021;
- Cotswold Local Plan – Adopted in August 2018;
- Forest of Dean Local Plan – Issues and Options consultation ended on 31st October 2019. FoDDC consulted on a 'preferred option' – the closing date for comments was 29th January 2021. GCC officers commented before this deadline.

5.0 Libraries & Registration

5.1 Libraries

- Our staff engagement survey closed on Friday 25th June 2021. We have had an excellent take up with over 3,000 responses received. We are now evaluating the responses.

5.2 Registration

- Changes to Registration processes continue to be made. Two legislative changes have come into force on 1st July which permit outdoor wedding ceremonies and EU non-settled citizens. Guidance was only made available for the outdoor ceremonies late on 30th July and the service is working to put processes in place, however, this is a complete change to the current licensing arrangements so will take time before we can undertake our first outdoor ceremony.

6.0 Waste Management

- Waiting times for an appointment to visit a Household Recycling Centre (HRC) by car remain low. Next day appointments are currently available at all five sites (as of 23rd June).
- A report is being prepared for July's Cabinet recommending the direct award of a contract to Ubico Ltd for food waste haulage from district council depots to the treatment facility at Andigestion, Bishops Cleeve. This will be an 8 plus 2 year contract term, commencing September 2021 (and aligning with the term of the new treatment contract with Andigestion). It will offer a saving through avoided procurement costs and a saving against current contract costs (which are with a number of local hauliers). The saving results from integrating this work with the existing HRC waste haulage undertaken by Ubico.
- Work continues on the development of a new contract for the management of the HRC service with Ubico. The new agreement will take effect from 1st September 2021. The draft Agreement and response document has been issued to Ubico, who are currently working up their response.
- Work is also underway on the procurement of new materials off-take contracts for the various waste streams collected for reuse, recycling and recovery at the HRCs. There are currently 28 different contracts in place, which are to be retendered and awarded ahead of contract commencement on 1st April 2022. The duration of these new contracts will be synchronised with the duration of the new Ubico management contract.
- Preparation is underway for the annual two-week maintenance outage at the Gloucestershire Energy from Waste facility. The outage is scheduled to commence on 30th August. Covid safe working practices will be used (regardless of the prevailing national advice).
- Plans are being finalised for the reopening of the visitor and education centre at the Energy from Waste facility, which has remained closed throughout the pandemic. Outreach work has been completed virtually, but the team looks forward to welcoming visitors back to the facility once government restrictions ease.
- A soft marketing testing exercise will be conducted in July with potential providers for the sale of electricity generated by the Energy from Waste Facility. This service is currently provided by EDF, which is under contract with the council until 2023. The work will be coordinated with the procurement of an energy buying service for the council (which is currently provided by WME).
- Responses have been issued to the recent government consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging waste and on a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks packaging. A response to a third consultation on greater consistency in recycling in England is currently being developed. The waste management team worked with district council colleagues to issue a joint response on behalf of the Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership.

7.0 Employment and Skills

7.1 Adult Education Service

- Since the implementation of the new staffing structure (commenced 1st September), good progress is being made with staff being embedded into new roles. The transition from old to new is progressing very well despite Covid-19 related challenges. An internal full review of our current processes and procedures is still underway to enable the Service to continue making improvements (streamlining, efficiency gains and cost savings). Full impact of the changes will not be shown from a working point of view until full service is up and running post Covid restrictions but so far staff are embracing the process well.
- Staff Questionnaire was sent out to all AES staff to ascertain how they felt about returning to work post Covid restrictions and with a view to continuing AGILE working. Majority of staff are keen to return to 3 days a week in the office and 2 days a week working from home. This will work well for the provision provided there is enough desk space in the office to allow for this post Covid. Discussions will take place with the team over the coming weeks to work out how the GCC Agile Working changes will fit around our service delivery.
- It is likely that longer-term the Service will retain more of a blended learning approach combining online and face-to-face learning, although this remains challenging with Community learning, we continued through the second and third lockdowns to provide face to face learning to those most vulnerable and facing digital poverty, which has seen all classes at capacity with 6 learners (socially distanced). The third lockdown led to 80% of our provision moving online, with only 20% of courses taking place face to face to support those who are facing extreme vulnerability with digital skills and mental health/wellbeing.
- Full process review is being undertaken by the new HoS to standardise procedures across the department, this includes new observation, enrolment and course development procedures and processes to allow for better Ofsted and Matrix readiness.
- Our current subcontractor framework is due to end with our 5 current subcontractors on July 31st 2021, and we would now like to go out to tender again (new ESFA 21/22 allocation, has been announced and detailed below). Documents have been submitted for Cabinet review at the June meeting to ensure that this process is completed by the deadline and service is not disrupted.
- ESFA funding allocation has been announced for 21/22 as follows:
 - Total £2,616,429 grant 1 – August 21 – March 22 - £1,639,193, grant 2 – April 22 – July 22 - £977,236
 - Distribution of grant as follows:
 - Adult Skills Allocation - £536,481
 - Community Learning Allocation - £2,064,048
 - National Skills Fund (Level 3 offer over 24yr) - £15,900
 - Advanced Learner Loans for 2021-2022
 - Total - £20,128 (August 21-March 22 - £12,715, April 22- July 22 - £7,413)
 - Planned Community Learning Allocation (total £2,064,048)
 - Subcontractors - £499,999
 - Direct Delivery - £1,564,049

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